

# Informational Interviewing:

Exploring a particular career path

## WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

An informational interview is your opportunity to investigate a specific career or career path.

You are not asking for a job.

You are:

- Gathering information to make an informed career decision
- Establishing a relationship with a professional contact(s)
- Exploring various career positions in a particular career field
- Learning about specific organizations
- Figuring out if your *perception* of a career matches the *reality*

## WHO SHOULD I ASK?

Start with who you know. Everyone has a network: friends, extended family, professors, co-workers, peers, friends-of-friends, etc. You don't know who they know until you ask!

Other resources that you can utilize are: Alumni, CEL/PEAK Center staff, and LinkedIn. If you are still at a loss, try doing your own search. What are big names in the career you are gathering information about? What are some local agencies doing that kind of work?

When you are ready to initiate contact, sending an email is the most preferred method. Make sure to clearly state you are a college student seeking to learn more about what the contact person does. Explain why you chose to contact them and/or how you found their contact information. If they are unable to meet with you or have a phone conversation with you, ask if they have suggestions of other individuals that would potentially be able to have a conversation with you.

## HOW DO I PREPARE?

When you start this process, think of it as developing your own profile or conception of a career. First, what do you have access to prior to the interview? Research the individual you want to contact; what does the "about" or "mission" on an organization's website says; perhaps find what educational background employees have (if that information is public); figure out if the organization has had internship opportunities in the past, etc.

Next, what do you want to know that you could not find online? Here are some questions you might have:

- What lead you to becoming a [enter contact person's job title]?
- How do you spend your day? At your desk, in meetings, moving around constantly, outdoors?
- Is there flexibility in the hours you work? Week days, on weekends, early in the morning, late at night?
- Are there travel opportunities with your position?
- How would you describe the organization's culture?
- What are the most important skills a [enter contact person's job title] needs?
- Do you see any trends or new developments that I should prepare for in the career field?
- What resources were influential or prepared you to be successful in your position?
- Do you have any suggestions of who else I would benefit from talking to? Is it ok to say you referred me?

### QUICK TIP :

After your interview has concluded, don't forget to send a thank you note to your interviewee!

